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DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

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Development Education in the United Kingdom

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The origins of development education in the United Kingdom

Development Education is an unfortunate name for a family of ideas - unfortunate because the term conveys very little to the uninitiated, and a family in the sense that its composition continues to change with time. Historically, the main impetus for what has become development education grew from the national "Freedom from Hunger" campaign and the concern of both the aid agencies and the churches for the millions of people overseas who were hungry and unimaginably poor. The aim was to impart as much information as possible about the conditions of hunger, poverty, ill-health, over/underpopulation and unemployment in the "Third World" - and the work of the various agencies to alleviate those conditions. It was very much education about development - other people's development.

Groups as diverse as the Co-operative Women's Guild and the Rotary Club raised large sums of money to be spent on items such as tractors for Botswana (and even collected old spectacles and false teeth for the cause of development). "Young Oxfam" groups filled milk-churns with the public's pennies and blistered their feet in the first of the really big sponsored walks. In the long tradition of British voluntary effort, such groups were trying to capture the hearts and minds (particularly the hearts) of the British public to give money to help the desperately poor. And in many ways they succeeded. Oxfam became a household name and the image of the starving child was burnt deep into the public consciousness.

Realizing that in the long-term, continued commitment to overseas aid would come only from a better-informed, better-educated public, the aid agencies began to invest some of their funds in work in British schools. Oxfam, for example, appointed the first regional education staff to work in selected areas in 1966. Most of the early education work was carried out in secondary schools. This was partly due to the nature of the educational materials produced by the agencies, but a more powerful reason for concentrating on secondary education concerned the changes taking place in curriculum development for secondary schools at the time.

Changes in secondary schools

At the end of the 1950's and early 1960's, it would not be unusual to find pupils who had completed a secondary "grammar school" education in which a study of geography was limited

perhaps to North America, Scandinavia and Great Britain. The history syllabus was likely to be confined to a period of British history which stopped short of the Second World War - if not the First - and had scarcely a passing reference to anywhere outside Europe. In the 1960's the growth of the new comprehensive schools led to some innovative attempts to integrate geography and history syllabuses or to link other subjects such as religious education, social studies and even home economics together. One of the objectives was to break down the compartmentalized, unrelated "blocks" of knowledge that had been a feature of grammar school education.

In that climate of change, what better material to offer for study than information about the Third World? It fitted into all the subjects just mentioned, and it had the advantage of being cheap, up-to-date, and frequently accompanied by interesting practical examples of some of the agencies' aid projects. Sometimes agency staff and returned volunteers from the Third World were willing to visit schools to speak about their experiences, and were able to introduce a sense of reality to their subject matter often missing from other school studies.

The success of the aid agencies' efforts was measured by actually counting the number of public examination questions which carried some reference to the Third World - usually in geography. The results of this lengthy exercise, which involved scrutiny of the papers of all the different public examination boards in the U.K., were published in a little booklet by the Voluntary Committee for Overseas Aid and Development (VCOAD), a co-ordinating organization whose work was funded by the aid agencies.

The symbiosis which has existed between development education and the development (aid) agencies has, I believe, important consequences for future strategies. Those who first taught about the "Third World" did so because they themselves were committed to the aims of the development agencies, and the underlying motivation for development education has been the same as that for aid-giving - basically moral and humanitarian.

A change in emphasis for development education

The transition from the emphasis on other people's problems, via an awareness of the complexities of aid and importance of trade, to present ideas on DevEd will be familiar. In 1975 the Joint UN Information Committee summed up the new emphasis thus: *The objective of development education is to enable people to participate in the development of their community, their nation and the world as a whole. Such participation implies a critical awareness of local, national and international situations based on an understanding of the social, economic and political processes. Development Education is*

concerned with issues of human rights, dignity, self-reliance and social justice in both developed and developing countries." This most certainly rescues development education from an obscure corner of the geography or religious education syllabus and establishes it as an extremely important dimension permeating the whole curriculum. But it is not one that is easy to teach.

The difficulties for teachers: a conflict of values

Although it would be a mistake to imagine that all teachers subscribe to the latest ideas on DevEd (their approaches will be as varied as the teachers themselves), it is a common experience that not only the content of DevEd may be new, but also new methods of teaching are necessary, such as the use of participatory simulation games. But ideas of participation, democracy, justice, etc., are often perceived by the pupils as being in conflict with the ethos of the school itself, its unspoken and unwritten values and manner of conducting its affairs. Generally speaking, the more authoritarian the school, the more difficult it is to teach development education - to the point where some teachers give up the struggle.
An additional difficulty derives from the former idea that most of the world's problems were located in the Third World but required solving by the developed countries. This encouraged attitudes of superiority which are a particularly unfortunate legacy for today's multi-racial classrooms.

Just as pupils have discovered that the values underlying development education are not those that will necessarily be rewarded in their school, so teachers are faced with a similar dilemma. The education system does not reward teachers who try to teach development education. In the secondary school, where teaching is largely subject-based, the way to promotion certainly lies in attendance at in-service teacher training courses. But since the teacher aims to become Head of Department in Geography or English, for example, it will be courses specifically in those areas that will gain approval. As development education cannot claim either a particular area or a particular method of study which would distinguish it from other subjects, it is best regarded as a dimension of existing subjects. And up to now, it is not a dimension widely regarded as important for the career progress of an individual teacher. (Even in the primary school, staff gain promotion by accepting special responsibility for music, reading or mathematics, for example. In an inner-city school with a mixed racial intake, there might be a post responsible for multi-cultural education, but never one for development education.)

Worse still, there are those who see all teachers of development education, peace studies and political studies as stereotyped threats to the stability of society. Given these difficulties it is remarkable how much effort many teachers invest in DevEd. But all too frequently they feel extremely isolated in their attempts as there is little guidance, training or support from the rest of the formal education system.

The decentralised system

This is largely due to the highly decentralised nature of the British system of education compared with many European systems. There has never been central control and the strong teacher unions continue to resist the present tendency towards centralisation. The country is divided into a number of Local Education Authorities (LEAs), each responsible for its own schools and colleges. A number of specialist advisers work for each Authority. Although in practice they may have a great deal of influence in, say, science, the humanities or primary education, their role is strictly persuasive rather than authoritarian. As a result of this decentralization both at national and local level, there are wide variations between primary schools. At secondary levels, these differences are tempered by the need to cover the syllabuses of the public examination boards. Nevertheless, there exists very considerable scope for initiative by individual teachers and head-teachers. This is both a strength and a weakness of the system.

From the point of view of the aid agencies, the decentralised nature of the system has meant a long and difficult task of trying to influence the curriculum by working through individual teachers. Unfortunately, schools are the target of many different pressure groups and fund-raising charities which regard them as an easy way of raising money. All too often, development education is seen as yet one more good cause linked to the fund-raising efforts of Oxfam or Christian Aid, and head-teachers and LEAs alike may be suspicious of the motives of education staff employed by aid agencies.

Development education employees became acutely aware of these difficulties and in the 1970's a number of semi-independent development education centres were established, which tried to attract support and funding from outside sources to lend substance to their ideas of "respectability" and independence. In reality, Oxfam still paid most of the bills.

The other focus of independent action was the Voluntary Committee on Overseas Aid and Development (VCOAD). Although

it was funded by the aid agencies, VCOAD did not identify with any one of them. Its small staff felt themselves to be independent although the Committee's title still reflected the "aid" emphasis.

Sources of funding for development education

In the absence of any significant grants from the Department of Education and Science (DES), the only organizations with an interest in development education and sizable funds to match were Oxfam and Christian Aid. They dominated activities, and the other agencies represented on the Schools Group of VCOAD, such as the U.K. Committee for UNICEF, were strictly limited in their efforts by the size of their tiny budgets. The U.K. Committee tried to carve a useful niche by concentrating on providing materials for the hitherto neglected area of primary education and by selling slides of a quality hard to match. The real problem was to attract sufficient funds from some external source to enable a wide variety of organizations to try out development education experiments and to make sufficient impact on the education system for the activity to be sustained afterwards.

The Development Education Fund

To its eternal credit, the Ministry of Overseas Development (ODM) came to the rescue. In 1976, the Minister, Judith Hart, used unspent money from the aid programme to establish a Development Education Fund of £150,000 and in 1977 set up an Advisory Committee on Development Education to review its operation. In the first 18 months of the fund over 175 applications were made for grants totalling £1,200,000. The motives of ODM in establishing the fund seemed strangely familiar. They wanted to produce a better-informed, better-educated British public which would support the British Aid Programme and prove wrong the old slogan that "there are no votes in overseas aid". This was remarkably similar to the motives which had led the aid agencies to begin to invest their funds in education a decade earlier.

The General Election of 1979 brought in a Conservative Government which "demoted" ODM from a separate Ministry back to a junior department (the Overseas Development Administration, ODA) of the Ministry responsible for foreign policy.

The Development Education Fund was prematurely axed before its impact could be properly assessed, and the last of the grants expired in August 1982.

Some results of the Fund

a) A public survey

Despite its short life, the Development Education Fund left behind a number of important legacies. When the Fund was first set up, one of the first actions of ODM was to commission a public survey of attitudes towards overseas development, to use as a starting point *"of an official effort to increase public knowledge of the problems of the developing countries and of the concept of international interdependence"*. 1/ The report of the survey was published in 1978 and gave a picture of *"two-thirds of the nation with parochial and introverted attitudes, unsympathetic to a world perspective, clinging to the past and untutored to approach the future constructively. Attitudes toward the underdeveloped countries in particular are coloured by stereotyped images, post-colonial guilt, racial and cultural prejudices, limited unbalanced knowledge, concern about future domestic employment, the belief that overseas development is synonymous only with aid, and that aid is motivated only by charity"*. 2/

In view of these findings, it was hardly surprising that the British public appeared less willing to be "charitable" in 1978 when recession and unemployment threatened at home than in 1969 when the previous survey was made. An interesting fact which emerged was that people over-estimated the role played by the non-profitmaking organizations (which I have been referring to as "aid agencies") and often thought that such organizations gave more in aid than the British Government. And of all the agencies it was Oxfam which had the highest public awareness level - nearly twice that of its nearest rival. Was it possible that Oxfam's undoubted earlier success in drawing attention to the needs of the desperately poor had contributed to negative images of people in Third World countries and to the belief that overseas development is synonymous only with aid, and that aid is motivated only by charity?

1/ *Judith Hart, in the Foreword to the "Survey of Attitudes towards Overseas Development", by T.S. Bowles.*

2/ *Dame Margaret Miles, writing on the Development Education Fund.*

If so, the result was unforeseen and unintended, but nevertheless the image of the starving child is an enduring one, despite the more sophisticated development "messages" used over the last decade.

b) The establishment of the Centre for World Development Education

Another important and lasting effect of the Development Education Fund has been the transformation of VCOAD (formerly financed by the aid agencies) into the independent Centre for World Development Education (CWDE). The Centre moved to new premises, doubled its staff, and began a steady expansion of activities covering a wide spectrum of education and information activities. Unfortunately, CWDE is also one of the victims of the closure of the Development Education Fund. Although the ODA will continue to provide some funding, CWDE has to raise at least 50 per cent (and more in future) of the total needed for it to keep going, thus diverting a major portion of the time and talents of its Director.

Activities of CWDE

Under the auspices of CWDE, several voluntary study/action groups were set up to look at particular aspects of development education, such as primary school education, religious education, geography teaching and the media. The first three groups produced ideas and guidelines which were published as booklets for teachers (financed by ODA) and distributed by a large number of LEAs to schools within their areas. The media group focused its attention on educational broadcasts designed for young people and also on other programmes they were likely to see or hear at home. A monitoring scheme was set up to find out how frequently any mention was made of development issues and to gain some idea of the quality of broadcasting in relation to development. The results were published in a booklet called *"Where, did you say?"* (financed partly by ODA and partly by CWDE) and showed that a mere 1.5 per cent of school broadcasting time was concerned with world development issues, and 5 per cent of time was in some way concerned with developing countries. These figures were generous in the sense that they included *"material of border-line relevance and all kinds of images and information from the cultural to the zoological".* 3/

3/ *"Where, did you say?" - published by the Centre for World Development Education.*

The International Broadcasting Trust

The publication of this information in 1980 was very timely. Discussions were taking place at national level about the proposed new fourth television channel and a lobby group had formed to press the case for allocating a percentage of the time to development issues. The broadcasting group's report provided incontrovertible evidence of the lack of time devoted to such issues in the existing TV channels. An exciting development since then has been the setting up of the International Broadcasting Trust - a consortium of over 60 NGOs which has been commissioned by the new Fourth Channel to produce programmes about development. The International Broadcasting Trust (IBT) has set up its own television production company and the first series of programmes, called "Common Interest", were screened early in 1983.

The Brandt Report

The other development which has had surprisingly positive results has been the publication of the Brandt Report. Sales of the paperback book exceeded all expectations and there was a surge of interest in development issues which has been both widespread and sustained. Perhaps the greatest interest has been shown by adult groups in the informal sector - local branches of NGOs, adult education groups, church groups. It is not clear whether the activity sparked off by the Brandt Report had something to do with the status of Brandt and his colleagues, or whether it was related to the fact that the report was prepared not by an aid agency but by a number of politicians looking at the interrelated development processes of North and South. Whatever the reason, it was a surprising result in the light of the findings of ODM's survey.

New strategies

The demise of ODM and the Development Education Fund demands a re-assessment of the best strategies for promoting development education in schools. Teacher training is obviously a key area and there has been an increase in the relatively small number of courses which touch on aspects of development. However, the colleges which run teacher training courses are threatened with cuts and closures and are painfully aware of those areas of work considered by the DES to be most important.

The DES as an agent of change?

The logical choice of an "agent of change" (which would also weaken the links with the aid agencies) would be the DES itself, so perhaps it is worthy of a little more attention.

In 1977, the Department of Education and Science issued a consultative document which said: "Our society is a multi-cultural, multi-racial one and the curriculum should reflect a sympathetic understanding of the different cultures and races that now make up our society. We also live in a complex, interdependent world and many of our problems in Britain require international solutions. The curriculum should therefore reflect our need to know more about and understand other countries". That reference gave hope to the supporters of development education but the statement has not been matched by any actions or funding to encourage pilot projects or curriculum development - with the exception of very small grants to the Council for Education in World Citizenship (CEWC) and the Standing Conference on Education for International Understanding (SCEIU) - though funding has been made available for multi-cultural education.

In 1979, the Labour Administration which issued that consultative document was replaced by a Conservative one, and since then there have been two different Ministers of Education. This is by no means unusual: between 1944 and 1980 there were 20 different top Ministers of Education and just as much movement amongst other ministers in the department. It is perhaps a strange British convention that when a government changes, the new incoming Ministers do not have access to the papers and files of their predecessors. This means that they have to start afresh the processes of evaluation and policy-making, and in the first years they are very reliant on the civil servants within their department to help them. Since most Ministers are in the job for less than two years, it is hardly surprising if they are rarely able to introduce any really different policies.

In the present context of financial stringency and falling school rolls, it would be remarkable if Ministers were to see development education as a priority area for action, and perhaps it was over-optimisticto expect anything other than the deafening silence from the DES on this subject since 1977. Multi-cultural education, on the other hand, attracts more attention because it is often seen as one of the solutions to the political problems which arise from having concentrations of ethnic minorities in deprived inner-city areas.

Given that there are frequent ministerial changes in the field of education, one might wonder whether the civil servants in the department are in a better position to identify educational goals and priorities. Unfortunately, what evidence there is does not give much cause for elation. In 1975 the OECD condemned the DES's approach as merely *"identifying existing trends"* and concluded that there was *"no attempt at a new identification*

and formulation of educational goals in a world where the traditional canons of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills are continually questioned". 4/ In the intervening years since then there has been nothing to suggest a positive lead by the DES - more a preoccupation with standards and a "core" curriculum in a time of recession.

The OECD also criticized the way in which the system of secret Cabinet committees (a feature of British Government) prevents British Members of Parliament from obtaining papers relevant to the formulation of DES policy. The closed nature of our system of government, with its lack of real accountability to Members of Parliament and the public, is hardly conducive to people's participation in "the development of their community, their nation and the world as a whole."

It would seem, then, that the DES cannot provide the financial and professional support so badly needed for development education, both by virtue of its position within a fiercely decentralised education system and by virtue of its own internal structure and character as part of the Civil Service. Whereas the (then) Ministry of Overseas Development was clearly in a position to promote development education as a means of increasing support for the aid programme, the DES, if it were to support development education, would have to support it as an end in itself and moreover, one which implies a system of values not necessarily subscribed to by the Civil Service or the Government.

The local education authorities as agents of change?

In terms of direct funding of development education projects it is virtually impossible for the LEAs to help at the moment - faced as they are with spending cuts and the prospect of having to make teachers redundant. However, practical support has been given to development education projects: in Hampshire, for instance, the LEA has provided a building and paid its related costs to house a World Studies Centre set up by the U.K. Committee for UNICEF with grant aid from the Development Education Fund. Professional support has been given by the local authority advisers. There is no doubt that the LEAs can be important catalysts for change, and the same LEA provides an interesting example of change in the field of religious education. One of the local authority advisers devised a new syllabus which recognized the multi-cultural character of

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4/ *From the Eleventh Report of the Expenditure Committee quoted in "The Civil Servants" by Peter Kellner and Lord Crowther-Hunt.*

schools in some parts of Hampshire. The syllabus was drawn up in consultation with local groups and representatives of the different ethnic communities. It was tested and evaluated in local schools and finally it was published and introduced into all schools in the county. The syllabus has been so successful that it has been "adopted" by a number of other LEAs.

Unfortunately, there are no advisers with particular responsibility for development education - once again the nearest equivalents are the few advisers for multi-cultural education - and it is most unlikely that LEAs will be able or willing to create new posts in the present economic climate. However, it might not be impossible to persuade LEAs to make development education part of the responsibility of existing advisers or to promote in-service teacher training courses which were understood to enhance promotion prospects.

The Local Education Authority is made up of a permanent professional staff with experience in different parts of the education system, and an Education Committee which is composed of elected representatives of the local political parties. There are also political appointments to the governing bodies of schools and colleges, together with parent and community representatives, so the promotion and appointment of staff partly reflect their views. It is by no means a straightforward exercise to try to influence the LEAs in favour of promoting development education - and there are over 120 different authorities to contend with - but it is probably a much better proposition than trying to galvanize the DES into action. It is certainly too much to expect that changes will come entirely from the teachers themselves.

The future

The Government has recently proposed that education should be funded centrally via the DES, rather than through the Local Education Authorities as at present. One advantage of this scheme might be that it would prevent some local authorities from making unduly large cuts in their education expenditure in order to save funds for their other budgets. However, it would also suggest less real influence for the LEAs and that is a suggestion that will be fiercely resisted. If more control does pass to the DES, then we can only hope most profoundly that the department will also acquire increased skills in identifying and supporting appropriate educational goals for the future. Otherwise it may well be that initiatives in the informal sector, such as the International Broadcasting Trust and the follow-up work to the Brandt Report, will prove to be the most important ones - for they will help to create the political climate in which development education will be accorded the importance it deserves. ■

Abbreviations:

CEWC	-	Council for Education in World Citizenship
CWDE	-	Centre for World Development Education
DES	-	Department of Education and Science (Ministry of Education)
IBT	-	International Broadcasting Trust
LEA	-	Local Education Authority
ODA	-	Overseas Development Administration
ODM	-	Ministry of Overseas Development
SCEIU	-	Standing Conference on Education for International Understanding
VCOAD	-	Voluntary Committee for Overseas Aid and Development

Please note:

This is the last in the DevEd Paper series. Henceforth, these will be incorporated in the UNICEF publication "IDEAS FORUM".